



Wilderness Review

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Wilderness reviews identify and recommend to Congress lands and waters that merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservations System (NWPS). Arctic Refuge initiated this wilderness review as part of its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) revision process. The review was conducted in accordance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wilderness Stewardship Policy and includes all areas of Arctic Refuge not currently designated as wilderness. The review incorporates recent information on the Refuge’s resources, uses, and management concerns.

In addition, the wilderness review helps us evaluate whether we are managing the Refuge according to its purposes and Section 1004 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which requires the Refuge to maintain the wilderness character of the coastal plain.

Wilderness Review Process

The wilderness review process has three phases:

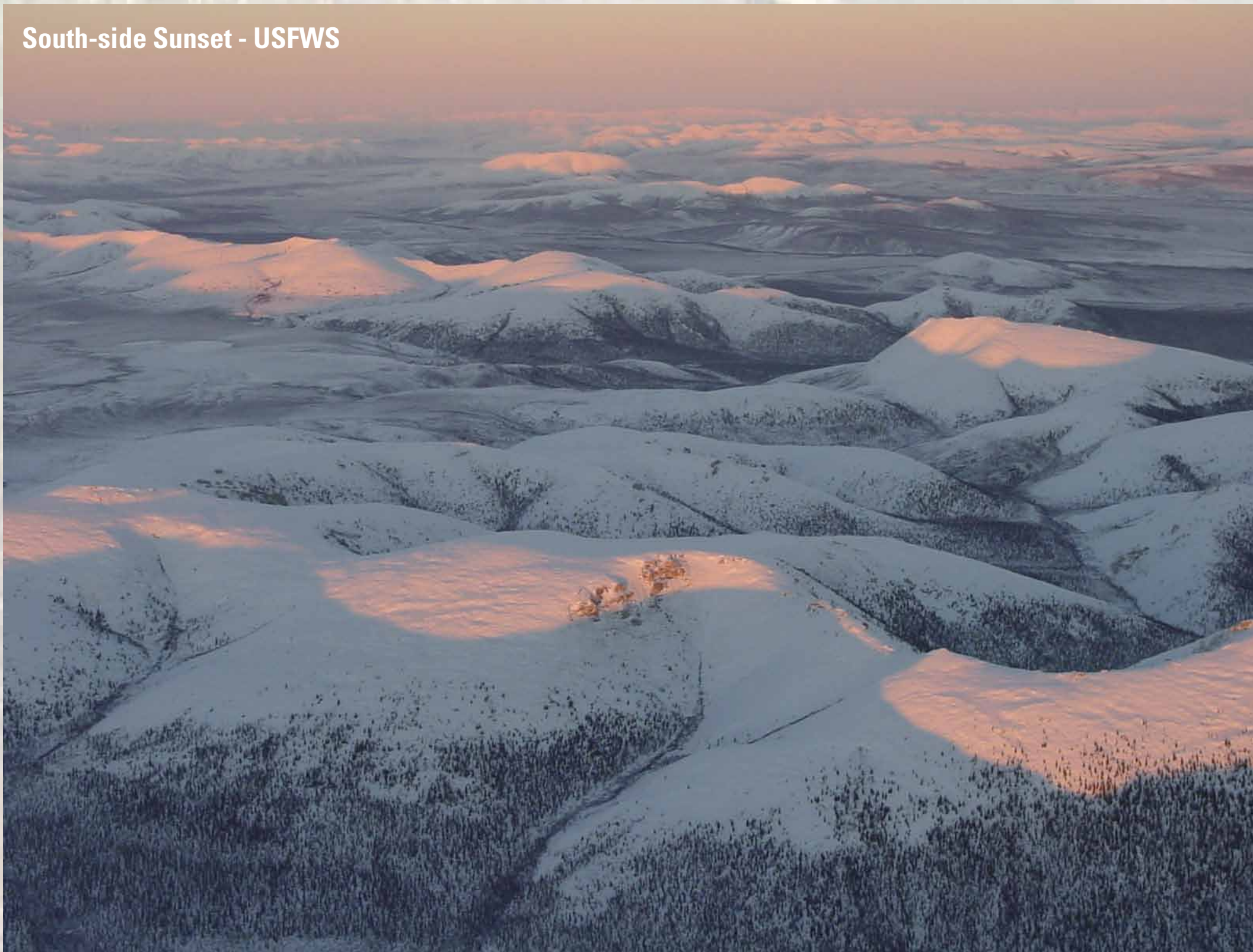
1. Inventory

Identify lands and waters that meet the minimum criteria for wilderness. These are called Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)—see map. Three criteria from the Wilderness Act were used to evaluate lands for their wilderness potential:

- a) **Size** – at least 5,000 acres
- b) **Natural condition** – the area generally appears to have been affected by the forces of nature and the imprint of human work is largely not noticeable
- c) **Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation** – an area that is largely free of modern artifacts, managerial presence, and other reminders of society, and where there is a high degree of privacy and isolation

2. Study

Evaluate WSAs to determine if they are suitable for wilderness designation. Public uses, resources, values, and Refuge management activities are considered. The benefits and impacts of managing an entire WSA, a portion of a WSA, or none of a WSA as designated wilderness are compared. The study also evaluates how designation would achieve Refuge purposes and purposes of the NWPS.



3. Recommendation

Findings of each WSA study are used to determine if the Service will make a wilderness recommendation. Recommendations, if any, are forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary may forward the recommendation(s) to the President, who may transmit them to Congress. Only Congress can designate wilderness.

We encourage you to review and comment on the full Wilderness Review in Appendix H of the draft revised CCP.

Wilderness Review Results

All three WSAs are exemplary in the degree to which they meet Wilderness Act criteria, and all WSAs were found highly suitable for wilderness recommendation. All areas are sufficiently large, protected, and far enough away from substantial threats that they could be managed as wilderness.

The only areas that did not meet the Wilderness Act criteria or were otherwise not suitable for inclusion in the NWPS were a 181,000-acre area near Arctic Village and a 29,000-acre area near Kaktovik.

